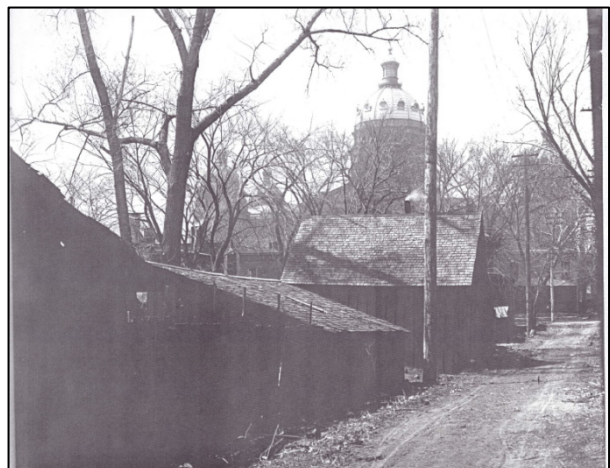


Pieces of Iowa's Past, published by the Iowa State Capitol Tour Guides weekly during the Legislative Session, features historical facts about Iowa, the Capitol, and the early workings of state government. All italicized text/block quotes in this document are taken directly from historical publications with the actual spelling, punctuation, and grammar retained.

Background

In 1913, as part of an effort to create a more visually appealing area around the Iowa State Capitol, the Iowa State Capitol Grounds Extension and Renovation Project was authorized by the Thirty-fifth General Assembly.

The Executive Council was instructed to purchase any or all of the 50 to 60 acres surrounding the Capitol within the following 10 years. At the time, however, many Iowans felt that this was merely a plan to provide Des Moines with a beautiful park at the expense of taxpayers. Before the project even got started, people began to question the necessity of such an undertaking. Animosity began to develop among several of the state's citizens. Some argued the grounds around the Capitol were fine, while others considered the area an eyesore. Inevitably, the issue was brought to the Iowa Supreme Court.



These pictures depict the views looking toward the Capitol from the east.

Project officials provided compelling photographic evidence to the court of the clutter and decay surrounding the Capitol. A series of four panoramic

photographs portraying a tidier area promoted the cause of those who opposed the project.

1913 Panoramic East View from the Iowa State Capitol

This series of panoramic photographs was taken in 1913. Each photo was taken from the second floor of the Capitol. This is a study of the buildings and homes to the east and the north.



Original panoramic photo courtesy of State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines
Electronically tinted: Legislative Services Agency

This photograph is the view from the second floor looking east of the Capitol at East Eleventh Street. Grand Avenue is on the far left and Walnut Street on the far right. The street running through the center of the photograph is Capitol Avenue, which ran almost to the east steps of the Capitol. Both East Eleventh Street and this portion of Capitol Avenue no longer exist. All of this area is now legislative parking.

Pictured to the far left, across Grand Avenue, is the Historical, Memorial and Arts building, completed in 1910. The building is now known as the Ola Babcock Miller Building. The house depicted on the corner of East Eleventh Street and Grand Avenue (423 E. 11th) belonged to John Day. The house next door (419 E. 11th) belonged to Gideon Ellyson. To the right, between Capitol Avenue and Walnut Street, is the building housing the State Dairy and Food Commission.



John Day home

Gideon Ellyson home

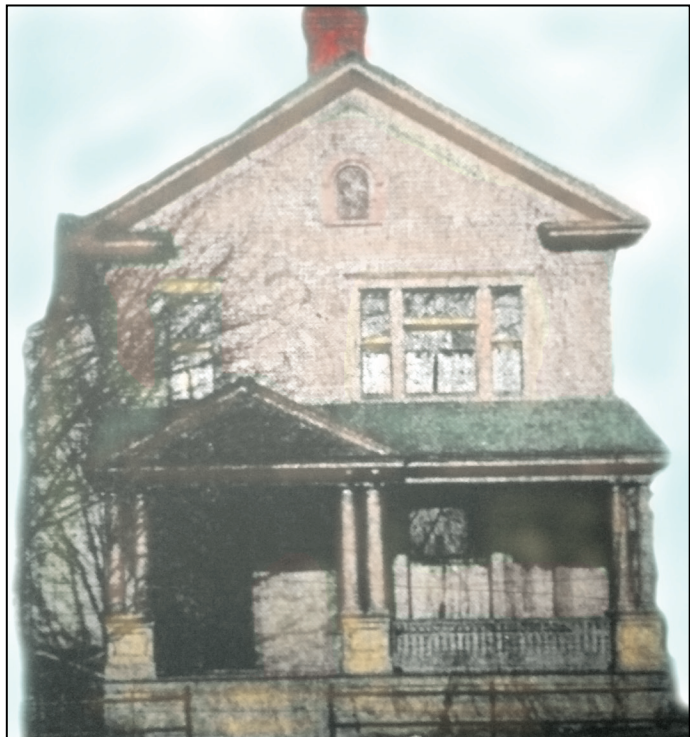


State Dairy and Food Commission

The Register and Leader.

June 7, 1913

The John M. Day home, corner of East Eleventh street and Grand avenue, was remodeled from the first family residence which stood on the ground now occupied by the Iowa heating plant. Mr. Day came from Mercer county, Pennsylvania, to Davenport, Ia., in 1858, where he engaged in the practice of law. He was married to Miss Jennie E. Rogers and came to Des Moines in 1868. Mr. Day abandoned his law practice to engage in real estate and farm loans, and was at the time of his death probably the largest land owner in Polk county. He was a promoter of the narrow gauge railroad between Des Moines and Ames, which was merged into the Northwestern railway. Mr. Day was a staunch republican, an ardent admirer of James G. Blaine, his former college friend, and with Mrs. Day a member and supporter of the Presbyterian church. Mr. Day was positive in character, and it is often said of him that "he never forgot a kindness." Bereft of her husband and two sons, Mrs. James E. Day still maintains the home with its treasured keepsakes and valuable works of art purchased in foreign travel. She is a member of Abigail Adams chapter, D. A. R., and of the Des Moines Women's club. Mr. and Mrs. Addison L. Parker are her companions in the home, and will accompany her to her new residence in West Des Moines.



The Des Moines Register

June 13, 2001

Political family thrived in shadow of Iowa Capitol

By RENDA LUTZ
REGISTER STAFF WRITER

Gideon D. Ellyson spent most of his life living in the shadows of the Iowa Capitol buildings.

Ellyson was born in the mid-1860s in a black walnut log cabin that stood where the present Capitol is now. Ellyson's father, Daniel, was a prominent early Iowa politician and one of the organizers of the Lincoln Club, the oldest political organization in the west.



G. Ellyson

Daniel Ellyson moved to Des Moines in 1860, purchasing the log cabin high on the bluff that overlooked the growing city. The cabin sat north of the first State Capitol building erected in

Des Moines.

The three-story brick Capitol was built in 1857 after lawmakers voted to move the Capitol from Iowa City to Des Moines. The Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument now stands in its place.

The Ellyson family had built a two-and-half-story frame home at 419 E. 11th St. by 1870, making way for the gold dome covered Capitol. The new home was constructed on a historic spot on Capitol Hill — the site where Harrison Lyon's first cabin stood surrounded by forest. Lyon's cabin was the site of many conferences with area Indians about their land.

Lyon, along with Willson Alexander Scott, was greatly responsible for the Capitol being located on the east side of the river. To lure the Capitol Commission to the east side, Lyon donated 10 acres for the first structure. He was joined by other



ROBERT NANDELL/THE REGISTER

Living large: Gideon Ellyson and his wife, Alice, lived in a large Victorian home at East 11th and Capitol streets with Ellyson's widowed mother. They were married in 1894.

property owners offering tracts for the site, including Scott.

When Iowa's present Capitol building was dedicated on Jan. 17, 1884, the Ellysons' vine-covered home faced the east side of the Capitol or what was known as the park surrounding the Capitol building.

After graduating from high school, Gideon Ellyson worked for a mercantile and then as a clerk for the State Insurance Co. He went on to serve as president of the East Des Moines school board and was one of the five original members of the Young Men's Republican Club. The club later merged with the Grant Club.

Ellyson was appointed deputy state treasurer by the Hon. Byron A. Beason in the early 1900s. Ellyson resigned to become president of the Marquardt Bank. The Marquardt

Bank was founded in 1891 by G.W. Marquardt. The bank's name changed to the Commercial Savings Bank in July 1909 to remove any impression of the institution being a private bank.

Ellyson married his wife, Alice, in 1894, three years after she moved to Des Moines. The newlyweds lived in the large Victorian home at East 11th and Capitol streets with Ellyson's widowed mother.

Numerous properties around the Capitol have been acquired, enlarging the Capitol grounds to more than 165 acres. The Ellyson family home became one of the casualties by 1915.

Ellyson went on to serve as director of First Trust and Savings Bank, treasurer of Ideal Auto Co. and president of Standard Chemical Co. He died of a stroke on Aug. 7, 1922 at his summer home at Lake Okoboji.

Correction: Lyon donated about an acre, and Scott donated about 9.5 acres.

1913 Panoramic North View from the Iowa State Capitol

Original panoramic photo courtesy of State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines
Electronically tinted: Legislative Services Agency

This photograph is looking north from the Capitol at Grand Ave from East Ninth Street to the far left to East Twelfth Street on the far right. To the left between East Ninth Street and East Tenth Street is residential housing. The brick structure on the corner of East Tenth Street and Grand Avenue is listed in the 1913 *Des Moines City Directory* as vacant.

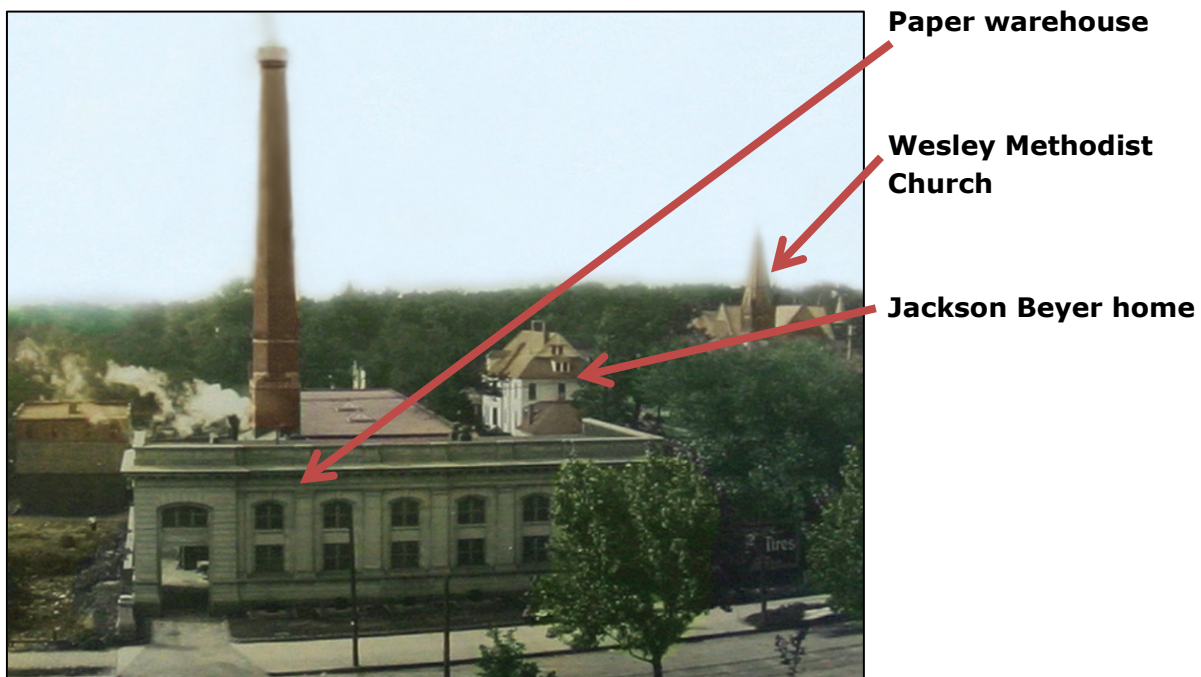


The photograph on the left was taken from Des Moines Street looking south toward the Capitol. The photograph on the right was taken from the north steps of the Capitol.



East Tenth Street

Straight north is the paper warehouse in front of the Capitol power plant. Behind and to the right of the power plant the large white home was the Beyer home. It was later used by Governor Harding as a Governor's residence, then converted to state office space for Vocational Rehabilitation, and then torn down to make room for the Jessie M. Parker Building. The steeple is Wesley Methodist Church. To the far right is the Ola Babcock Miller Building.





Jackson Beyer home

The Register and Leader.

June 7, 1914

The property at 1027 Des Moines street, owned and occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Jackson Beyer has been mentioned as a prospective governor's residence. It is an eleven room house built in 1893, and given a beautiful interior finish by Mr. Beyer, of the J. H. Queal Lumber company. The marriage of Mary Elizabeth Queal and Jackson Beyer occurred in Ames. Their two children, Lucy Beyer-Englebeck and John Beyer, are married and reside near their parents. As a descendant on her mother's side of Lieut. William French, who came over from England in 1635, Mrs. Beyer became much interested in the genealogical tree, and spent some time in the compilation of the lines of the French and allied families, which was issued in a 400 page book, 200 copies de luxe edition. Mrs. Beyer has been a zealous worker in the Methodist church

and has held a place on the board of directors of the Methodist hospital. Besides her affiliation with the Associated Charities she has a membership in Abigail Adams chapter, D. A. R., and Chapter V, P. E. O. Mr. and Mrs. Beyer are members and frequent entertainers of the Friday club.

Des Moines Tribune

May 29, 1965

This frame house on Des Moines Street has been a private home, a governor's residence, the headquarters for the State Department of Health, and the Vocational Education

Training Center—its present role. Ramps and a fire escape chute on the left side of the building were installed because handicapped persons receive training there. The tip of the Capitol dome rises above the trees.



[The Iowa Capitol Grounds: 1913 Extension and Reconstruction Project](#)

This booklet contains the proposed improvements, pictures, and newspaper articles of the period. This booklet is also available for purchase in the Capitol Gift Shop.